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Crescendo! The Newsletter of the Buffalo Gay Men's  
Chorus

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

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Winter 2005

# Crescendo!, Winter 2005

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

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# Crescendo!

The Newsletter of  
the Buffalo Gay  
Men's Chorus

Volume 3 • Issue 2  
Winter 2005



*The Artists Formally Known as the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus took the stage at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery's Gusto at the Gallery series on Friday, December 3 in their new concert apparel. The Board of Directors approved a change from the BGMC's black shirt/black trousers wardrobe to tuxedos and each man has purchased his own formal wear. Thanks go to Tony Penque of Tuxedo Junction for speeding the process of fitting our 65 singing members!*

## *Some Like It Hot* will be our guests at January concerts

When the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus was invited to sing at SUNY Fredonia's Gay Pride Festival in November, they had no idea who else would be on the program with them.

Our men found themselves leading the cheers for a smart 'n' sassy all-female a cappella group who call themselves *Some Like It Hot*. The BGMC is delighted that SLIH will share the stage at our January **Brothers In Song** concerts, when you'll also hear guests **Glenn Einschlag** and **Cantor David Goldstein**.

*Some Like it Hot*, led by SUNY Fredonia senior music education major **Betsy Stambach**, has been singing its own arrangements of contemporary pop songs since 2002. The fourteen singers include theater, English and business majors as well as music education and music business majors.

"Hotties" spend five hours each week rehearsing their upbeat repertoire. "We always rehearse in a circle," said Ms. Stambach. "We make as much eye contact as possible with each other and we



move together." Vocal percussion — drum-like sounds made with the mouth and the body — keeps the beat moving.

*Some Like It Hot* travels annually to SUNY Geneseo to perform at AIDS benefits. They've been invited to sing with the University of Rochester *Midnight Ramblers* (a men's a cappella ensemble) in the spring and to an a cappella festival in Horseheads, NY. You can learn more about them at [www.geocities.com/fredslrh/home.html](http://www.geocities.com/fredslrh/home.html), but don't miss your chance to "get Hot" here in Buffalo on **January 21 and 22!**



# President's Column

by Dave Gannon, BGMC President

Fulfilling the BGMC's mission, to provide quality men's vocal music, doesn't just happen. Aside from building the support of our audience, family and friends there is a lot that takes place between concerts that many people don't realize.

We rehearse weekly, every Tuesday evening from 7 PM to 9:30, give or take a few minutes. Anyone who has sung with **Barbara Wagner** as a director knows that the usual rule is, "Let's take a few more minutes to perfect this phrase." It's well worth it! Barb is at the center of the BGMC community, and we love her! — but you should know that there are others who make this all happen for us, too.

The production team, headed by **Woody Sipprell** (B1), works far ahead of concert time making sure that the performing space can artfully accommodate 65 singers. The team prepares by negotiating for risers, and they consider suggestions as to how we can best arrange ourselves. Woody's team makes sure that there is a light meal for the singers before each concert, not only to ensure no one passes out from hunger but also to keep all of us together before the performance. This promotes a sense of camaraderie that we believe enlivens our performances.

Throughout the rehearsal season, **Ramón Melendez** (B1) handles efficient communication among the singing members. He keeps our membership roster up to date so we can communicate with each singer as we need to. Ramón also adds to the "family" feeling in the group by arranging a birthday celebration each month at one of the rehearsals, varying the selection of cake not only according to his own likes, although there seems to be more chocolate cakes than any other kind, but also to the likes of others.

And of course, **Dennis Stuart** (B1) heads up the *Friends of the BGMC* to make sure that we ask you for your help. You may notice that we only ask once per year for your donation. This is because Dennis insists that we limit our solicitation so as not to annoy our kind contributors. Dennis also monitors the use of our FOBGMC membership list so that it cannot be (and will never be) shared, sold or otherwise distributed.

In addition to the official duties of Board members, most of whom are also singers, there are a number of committees and volunteers. They make sure our efforts come together to provide not only the quality music we know you will enjoy, but also to help us reach out to the community. We know this helps meet one objective spelled out in our mission statement, which is to enlighten those who still hold onto stereotypes of gay men.

From our public relations director, **Cherie Messore**, who gets our message out; to the program committee who publish our concert program; to the editors of this very newsletter — all contribute their time and energy in addition to working hard making music at rehearsals. Our non-singing volunteers include **Ed Giannino** and **Chuck Alaimo**, who show up weekly to assist with administrative chores; former Board member **John Herbert**, who coordinates ticket sales; and the **Front Runners** who on concert nights act as ushers and ticket takers; and the myriad volunteers who put together and host our post-concert receptions. It would take me a forest full of trees to name them all. My apologies to those I haven't named — EVERYONE associated with the BGMC plays a vital role even if he or she is not always visible.

As president, but more importantly as a singing member of the BGMC, I can't begin to say THANK YOU loudly enough or long enough. All of your behind-the-scenes hard work, plus the support of our family and friends, keeps us singing with pride and with one voice. Thanks to each and every one of you.

The Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus, Inc. is a member of the **Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses, Inc.** (GALA Choruses). GALA Choruses fosters the artistic and organizational development of member choruses through a variety of programs and services.

For more information, visit [www.galachoruses.org](http://www.galachoruses.org)

## Crescendo!

The Newsletter of the  
Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

Volume 3 · Issue 2 · Winter 2005

Editor: **Roger Parris**  
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**Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus, Inc.**  
Incorporated 2001 as a 501 (c)(3)  
not-for-profit corporation in the  
State of New York.

Music Director: **Barbara Wagner**

Public Relations Director:  
**Cherie Messore**

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**Dennis Stuart, Steve Young**

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**BGMC**  
The Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

## Barb's Corner

By Barbara Wagner, BGMC Music Director

*Music gives peace to the restless,  
and comforts the sorrowful.  
They who no longer know where to turn find new ways,  
and those who have despaired  
gain new confidence and love.*  
— Pablo Casals

Casals' poignant words of comfort and hope have taken on new meaning for me. Like many of you, I struggle with feelings of hopelessness and helplessness as I look around and wonder about my place in this world, which has changed so dramatically. But then, I've always known, just as I do now, that I belong with my singers and the music that can never be taken from any of us.

Every Tuesday night, BGMC rehearsals begin with warm-ups and back rubs as we connect with one another as only a group of singers with a common goal can. There is always much laughter, perhaps a disagreement or two, and often a quiet tear when a song touches us deeply. Michael Martin's song, *When I Hear Music* reminds us "There are so many songs unsung, so much hope to bring, you've set my life to music, I'll sing on." The men of BGMC and I believe that passionately.

Since September, we've taken our "songs of hope" on the road. We went downtown for a fundraiser for the UB Dental School and to SUNY at Fredonia for their Pride Celebration. We sang at St. Paul's Cathedral for an AIDS memorial service, and we sang at the opening *Viva Vivaldi* concert with **Marylouise Nanna** and the **Ars Nova Musicians**. Many of you saw us at the Albright-Knox as part of the *Gusto at the Gallery* series.

And now, we are joyously preparing for a pair of major concerts. On **Friday, January 21** we sing at the **UU Church** and on **Saturday, January 22** at **Temple Beth Zion**, a brand new venue for us. We've named the program *Brothers in Song*, the title of the song by Edvard Grieg that will formally open our concert. **Cantor David Goldstein**, a dear friend of many years and an extraordinary baritone, will be joining us for the Saturday performance. At the Friday concert, principal bassoonist with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and a B2 with the BGMC, **Glenn Einschlag**, fresh from an acclaimed concerto performance with the orchestra, will be the guest soloist.

**Some Like It Hot**, a group of young women from SUNY at Fredonia will join us for both concerts. SLIH is a delightful a cappella group that many of us from BGMC had the privilege of hearing at the college's Gay Pride Festival. BGMC will reprise the Schütz "Jubilate Deo" from the *Viva Vivaldi* concert, but this time we'll add a few fireworks as a pair of trumpets joins us. Soprano **Jennifer Grace-Mernitz** will join us for Verdi's "La Vergine



The BGMC participated in an AIDS memorial service at St. Paul's Cathedral in Buffalo. Here, St. Paul's organist-choirmaster **Andrew Cantrill**, a past member of the BGMC, chats with **Barbara Wagner** and singers **Shaun Doyle** and **Jason Ward**.

degli' Angeli" and — hold on to your hats! — we have a setting of the great tenor aria from Puccini's *Turandot*, "Nessun Dorma" for men's chorus. Thanks to the "Three Tenors," this may be the best-known tenor aria ever composed.

We'll present a couple of lovely German songs: Schubert's "Serenade" and a stunning piece by Brahms, which our good friend **Richard Herr** arranged for us. There's lots more: You'll hear some new soloists, **David Mathewson** and **Cedric Taporco**; the exciting spiritual, "Sinner Man"; the great patter song "Rhythm of Life" from *Sweet Charity* and much more!

Don't miss this concert — come early and stay late and meet the members of the chorus at the reception. The men of the BGMC will be wearing their fabulous brand-new tuxedos — a very exciting move for us as we begin our fourth year of singing together!

I'm very, very proud of these wonderful, generous, loving and talented men and I'm blessed by their presence and their music. As always, you, our good **Friends of the BGMC**, make our music possible with your friendship and support. Thank you for being there.

The men of BGMC and I wish you all a happy and healthy New Year!

Love,  
*Barb*

## BGMC: Out in the world and singing with pride

We're just 3-1/2 years old, but the BGMC is maturing as a part of the Western New York and Southern Ontario arts and cultural community. It's a pleasure to respond positively when we are asked to perform at events and celebrations that benefit organizations that welcome our message and our music.

In the next few months you will find the BGMC appearing at these events:

- On Friday, **April 15** the Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst will present **The Best of the BGMC** as a concert to benefit the church.

continued on page 6

# BGMC: Partners in song

By Cherie Messore

Winston Churchill once said, "If we are together, nothing is impossible." While singing well together makes a good chorus shine, good choral groups who work together put a special spotlight on the beauty and elegance that is choral music.

The BGMC is always looking for ways to celebrate choral music. Whether we're seeking advice from more seasoned gay choruses, or inviting solo singers or guest instrumentalists to join us in concert, the BGMC is proud to pursue creative collaborations on stage and behind the scenes. Last summer's trip to GALA was a great example. BGMC members and music director Barbara Wagner enjoyed mixing and mingling with other gay choruses to share ideas, network and learn from each other. Some of these ideas influenced our January concert program.

This season we also reached out to other choral groups in our community to cross-market our winter and spring concerts. As you page through your programs at our January concerts, you'll notice full-page ads from the Buffalo Choral Arts Society, The Freudig Singers and the Rochester Gay Men's Chorus. These fine groups extended the same courtesy to the BGMC, as we build on each other's strengths and share news about our concerts with choral music lovers — just like you — who also believe, like Churchill did, that good things happen when like-minded people work together.

Cherie Messore manages the BGMC's public relations.

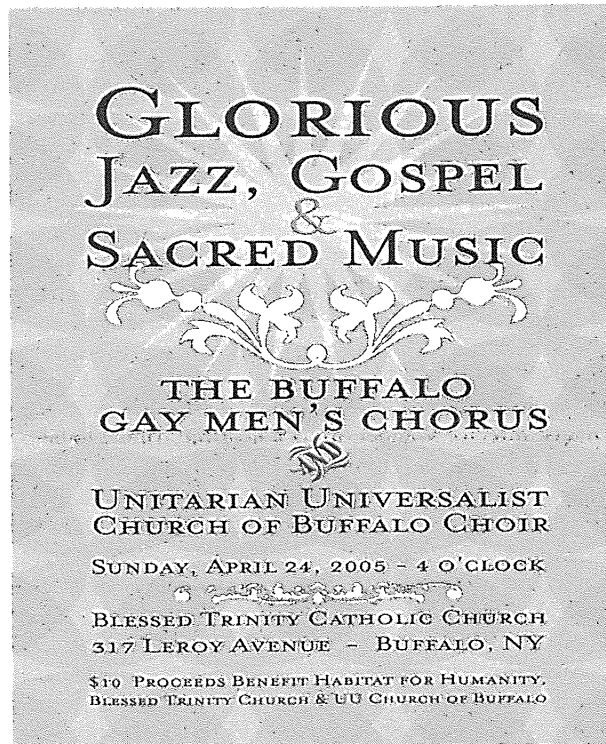
## "My Boys"

By Elizabeth Licata

Their first rehearsal was scheduled for September 11, 2001. Since coming together on that emotional evening, the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus has had nine major concerts, attracted a large and active circle of non-singing supporters and volunteers, and continually adds to its already large roster of voices. There is a newsletter, a fundraising arm, a website, and a dedicated board of directors.

Now over seventy men strong — plus one woman director — the BGMC has in barely three years become an indispensable component of the Western New York music scene. Their concerts are usually held in the winter and late spring, and they are also starting to appear in concerts organized by other groups — most notably, they sang with the Buffalo Philharmonic in March 2004, as part of a "French Connection" program of music by Ravel, Poulenc, and Faure.

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The BGMC and the Choir of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo will join forces for *Glorious Jazz, Gospel and Sacred Music* on Sunday afternoon April 24 at 4:00 at Blessed Trinity RC Church, 317 Leroy Avenue in Buffalo.

Our concert will benefit the UU Church, Blessed Trinity Church, and Habitat for Humanity, whose current projects include the *Women Build House* on Johnson Street in Buffalo's East Side. Habitat for Humanity/ Buffalo volunteers work together with selected partners to put low-income families in safe, clean, and affordable housing.

Tickets at \$10 are available from BGMC members and from Bonnie Botsford, at 883-2078. Because of limited parking in the area, we advise carpooling and arriving early.

## "My Boys" continued from page 4

As professionally successful as this group is, however, there is far more to it than music. Perhaps because of the traumatic circumstances that accompanied their founding, perhaps thanks to the generous spirit of their director Barbara Wagner, and perhaps — most of all — because they are the only musical group in Western New York who self-identifies as gay, BGMC is more like a family than a group of disparate musicians.

BGMC member Dennis Stuart explains that "joining the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus has been like being with seventy cousins I haven't met yet—it's been an instant family. Making beautiful music, socializing with other gay men without any pressure (or alcohol!), contributing to the straight community's understanding and acceptance of diversity: As the song goes, 'these are a few of my favorite things.'"

Tonawanda member Bill Hardy reinforces the motive of education: "To me, being in the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus means creating new friendships and honing musical skills that had lain dormant for thirty-five years. But probably the most important reason, at least for me, is being afforded the chance to possibly change people's perceptions of who and what gay people really are."

"It's like being in a really large (and gay) family," says member R. Jeffrey Proctor. "You're surrounded by those whom you can relate to, people who are sensitive to experiences, both negative and positive, that you may be going through in all aspects of your life."

Finally, director Wagner offers a heartfelt tribute to her choir: "The enormous musical gifts, courage and unbridled joyousness of this loving group of singers is a source of strength to me every day of my life. When Robert Shaw, the great conductor was asked in a question and answer session a few years ago, how he felt about an especially gifted tenor section. He said, 'I have never before worked with tenors this fine and no one ever should until they're at least seventy-five and know what they have.' I think of that often when I think of 'my boys.' I'm mature enough and wise enough to know that I have been blessed with something magical. These men have stolen my heart."

Maybe they'll steal your heart as well.

Reprinted from *Buffalo Spree* with the kind permission of the author.

## The power of music: A personal journey

By Hanford Searl

When you attend our *Brothers in Song* concert in January, listen closely to the way the melodic line, the chords and the lyrics unfold as we sing. Michael Martin's emotional "When I Hear Music" will lift your spirit; it will encourage you to reflect about friends, family, relationships, even your beloved pets. You will feel, simply, the power of music.

Medical research shows music helps with the development of a child's brain at an early age. Whether from recordings, radio, television, the movies, or live performance (our favorite!) music feeds and nourishes our moods. Chant, hip-hop, classical, jazz and everything in between reorients our frame of mind, causes joy or sadness, and uplifts our hearts. The experience of music affects and enriches all of us.

The world of music has played an integral role in my life, especially the time I've spent in both the mainstream and gay news media. As a teen, whenever I went to films in downtown Buffalo I bought copies of *Billboard* magazine. Who knew then that I'd write for it later?

The power of music showed itself early for me — and many of us in the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus — when we sang in choirs in elementary and high schools, college and church. As singers we had the total sensory experience of making music. We vocalized with lungs, throats and mouths; we read scores and followed the director with our eyes; we listened to each other and we reveled in the full sound of the entire choir.

Chorus membership paid travel dividends. My high school choir sang Handel's *Messiah* at the Eastman School of Music and opened the Empire State pavilion at the 1965 World's Fair in New York. Our college choir toured New Mexico; we sang in the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City. As members of Buffalo's Westminster Presbyterian Church choir, we performed at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., and toured Great Britain. Everywhere we went we encountered new people and made musical memories.

Marching in Gay Pride parades in New York in 1985 and Washington, D.C. in 1987 showed me more of the healing power of music. The upbeat sounds of the Gay Men's Marching Band following our Gay Mormon group down Broadway lifted our spirits. Quiet music comforted us at the unfolding of the AIDS Quilt on the National Mall. I was in awe of the power of music.

During intense, personal periods of grief, music carried me through the devastating loss of Gary Hager, my neighbor and partner from high school and college years. Followed closely by my mother Dot's unexpected death, I had lost the two most important people in my life. Mom had started a chapter of Parents & Friends of Lesbians & Gays here. At both memorial services, I let go with sobs as music

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**BGMC: Out in the world and singing with pride** *continued from page 3*

- On Sunday, **April 24** please join us for **Glorious Jazz, Gospel and Sacred Music**, an afternoon concert where the BGMC will sing to benefit the work and the building fund of Blessed Trinity Church in North Buffalo.
- On Saturday, **May 14** the BGMC will share the stage with **Forté, the Toronto Men's Chorus** and **WomEnchant Chorus** of the Hamilton/Niagara Region at a fundraiser for Niagara Pride Support Services, Inc.
- On Sunday, **June 5** the BGMC will march and sing at the annual **Buffalo Gay Pride Parade and Celebration**. No tickets necessary!
- **Fearless!** the BGMC's second concert of season, will be presented at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo on **June 17** and St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral on **June 18**.

Please join us when you can. Tickets are available through the presenting organizations and BGMC members. Seats to **The Best of the BGMC** in Amherst are limited. Check the back page for locations and times. Updated information will be available at the BGMC's website, [www.buffalogaymenschorus.com](http://www.buffalogaymenschorus.com).

**The power of music: A personal journey** *continued from page 5*

played. Singing at the Interfaith Service in New York's Lincoln Center helped us heal during the Gay Games in 1994. When Missy, my mother's 15-year-old husky-shepherd died last year, music was my comfort.

During the last five years, working on a TV pilot, I reunited with the late Rick James, a neighbor in Orchard Park. I'd first met him when I reviewed his memorable 1981 concert for *Billboard*. We connected again at the House of Blues on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood. He had allowed us to use a cut from his *Urban Rhapsody* CD on our closing credits. Music brought friends together.

For many of us, singing in the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus and earlier gay/lesbian choruses in Buffalo has produced music's greatest impact. Coming together in song as out gay men, lesbians and our straight brothers and sisters has helped make us whole, while we reach out to others in our community.

The experience of singing this past summer in Montreal at the International GALA Choral Festival helped expand BGMC's understanding of our mission. Listening and watching six thousand GLBT brothers and sisters in 160 choruses of all races, orientations, shapes and sizes from seven countries has changed us. The Sister Sledge pop hit, "We Are Family" took on a universal theme. As we listened, many of us took notes and borrowed creative ideas for our own concerts. We let old and new music change us — and we drew closer together as a chorus of proud, singing gay men.

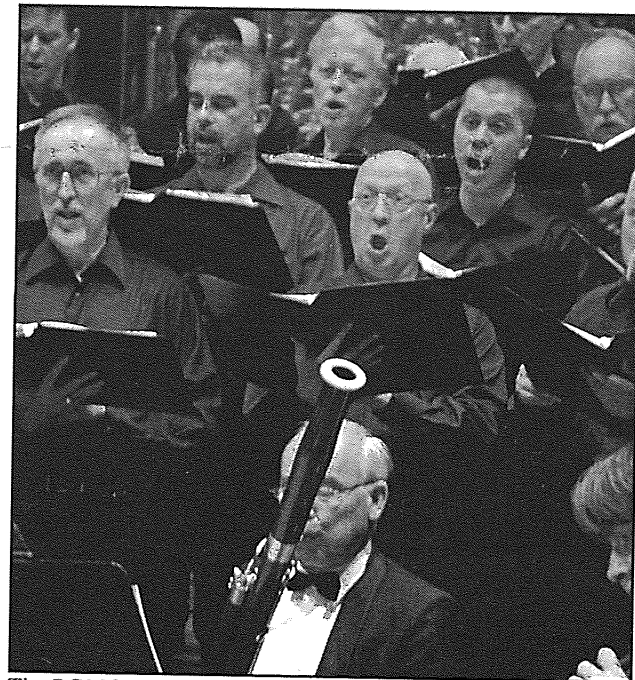
If you allow yourself to get lost in Martin's "When I Hear Music," it will play over in your heart and mind, perhaps for weeks. You'll remember this concert, old and new loves, friends present and past, family members and pets who enriched your life.

That's the power of music.

*Hanford Searl (T1) has contributed to Billboard magazine and The Buffalo News. He worked for public relations firms in Los Angeles, served as Editor of the East Aurora Advertiser, and wrote for Volumé in Buffalo and gay publications in New York and Los Angeles. His first book, on being a Gay Mormon for 16 years, is under negotiation with a New York publisher.*



Buffalo's arts and entertainment community joined for a "Winter Solstice Chill Out" presented by Arts Council in Buffalo and Erie County and held at Sphere Entertainment Complex. Arts Council Executive Director **Celeste M. Lawson**, center, and Event Coordinator **David Butler**, left, hosted the party. Music Director **Barbara Wagner**, right, and several Board members represented the BGMC.



The BGMC appeared as guest artists with Marylouise Nanna conducting the **Ars Nova Museum Chamber Orchestra** on the popular "Viva Vivaldi!" concert series in November.

# BROTHERS *in Song*

**BGMC**  
Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

Singing with pride since 2001

call 883.1277 for tickets  
or visit  
[www.buffalogaymenschorus.com](http://www.buffalogaymenschorus.com)

Performances begin at 8pm

FRIDAY, JANUARY 21

Unitarian Universalist Church

Elmwood Ave. at W. Ferry, Buffalo

SATURDAY, JANUARY 22

Temple Beth Zion

805 Delaware Ave., Buffalo

SPECIAL GUESTS

"Some Like it Hot"

Women's a cappella ensemble from SUNY Fredonia

Friday & Saturday Performances

Cantor David Goldstein

Saturday Performance Only



## SAVE THESE DATES!

Friday January 21, 2005 • **Brothers in Song** • 8 pm • Unitarian Universalist Church • 695 Elmwood Avenue

Saturday January 22, 2005 • **Brothers in Song** • 8 pm • Temple Beth Zion • 805 Delaware Avenue

Friday April 15, 2005 • **Best of the BGMC** • 7:30 pm • Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst • 6320 Main Street

Sunday April 24, 2005 • **Glorious Jazz, Gospel and Sacred Music** • 4 pm • Blessed Trinity Church • 317 Leroy Avenue

Saturday May 14, 2005 • **Concert** • 8 pm • Trinity United Church • 4287 William Street • Beamsville, ON

Sunday June 5, 2005 • **Buffalo Pride Parade and Celebration** • Time TBA • Bidwell Parkway

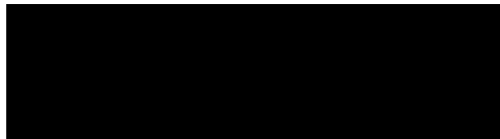
Friday June 17, 2005 • **Fearless!** • 8 pm • Unitarian Universalist Church • 695 Elmwood Avenue

Saturday June 18, 2005 • **Fearless!** • 8 pm • St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral • 128 Pearl Street

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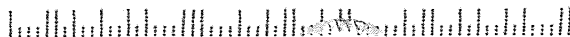


BROTHERS *in Song*



FRIDAY, JANUARY 21  
SATURDAY, JANUARY 22

42802 37



Cut along dotted line and mail bottom portion with your donation today to: **BGMC, 695 Elmwood Ave., Buffalo, NY 14222.**

**Yes, I'll join the Friends of the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus!**

*Thank you for helping the growth & success of BGMC. Your contribution is tax deductible.*

- |  |   |   |
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**Friends who contribute at the \$200 "Conductor" level and above will receive two tickets to our next concert.**

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☐ I have time or services that may help the BGMC. Please contact me.